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ABSTRACT

This document reports the findings of an evaluation of the Family Day Care Training and Accreditation Program, a voluntary program for family day care providers in San Antonio, Texas. The program consisted of eight training workshops, home visits, and a validation. Workshop topics included: space to play and learn, health and safety, growth and development, planning an activity program, handling behavior problems, working with parents, business management, and child abuse prevention. The evaluation specifically addressed two questions: (1) To what extent is the training program able to improve the quality of care which participants provide? (2) Are there any weak spots in the workshops which could be improved? An item analysis was made of 62 family day care validations conducted in 1988 using the Harms and Clifford Family Day Care Rating Scale, a measure composed of 36 items in 6 categories: space and furnishings, basic care, language and reasoning, learning activities, social development, and adult needs. Pretest scores obtained during home visits were compared with posttest scores after providers completed a 20-hour training program. Results revealed a significant improvement in scores and indicated improvement in the quality of child care that providers offered after participation in the program. (RH)

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Abstract

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This report outlines the results of an item analysis of sixty-two family day care validations conducted in 1988 using the Harms & Clifford Family Day Home Rating Scale as part of the City of San Antonio's Family Day Care Training and Accreditation Program. Pretest scores, obtained during home visits were compared with posttest scores after providers had completed a 20 hour (8 workshop) training program. Results showed a significant improvement in scores and indicated an improvement in the quality of child care these providers offered after participation in the training program.

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ARTICLE TITLE: DOES TRAINING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

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The author has sixteen years of experience in the field of early childhood education including; day care center teacher, director of two different high quality centers, board member for the Ramsey County Coordinated Child Care Council, director of the center accreditation program at Resources for Child Caring, corporate child care consulting and parent education trainer. As one of the founding members of the Early Childhood Director's Association in St. Paul she worked closely with the Ramsey County Family Day Care Association to lay the foundation for the local resource and referral system. She has recently completed a Master's program in Early Childhood Education at the University of Texas at San Antonio. This paper is part of a research project conducted as an independent study project at UTSA with the assistance of Paul Westmeyer, PhD.

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DOES TRAINING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Training and accreditation for family day care providers is certainly becoming one of the "hot" child care topics of the 80's. The common sense knowledge that training for caregivers improves the quality of care they provide was verified several years ago by results of the National Day Care Home Study which was conducted by the Administration for Children Youth and Families (Stallings and Porter, 1980). Recent family day care studies found a correlation between training experience and high quality child care (Howes, 1983; Clark-Stewart and Gruber, 1984; Fischer, 1988; Jones and Meisels, 1987; and Stuart and Pepper, 1985). Several of these studies used the Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) to evaluate the level of quality in the homes (Harms and Clifford, 1984). However, one of the real problems in studying and reporting on the effects of training involves the fact that to date, no standard curriculum and system for family day care training has been agreed upon or established within the child care industry.

TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION

In Texas day home providers are registered by mail and allowed to care for children without ever receiving the benefit of a monitoring visit by the state. Although a criminal background check is conducted prior to approval of the registration application, the providers are inspected only after a complaint has been lodged against them. In 1985 the City of San Antonio initiated a voluntary training and accreditation program for providers in order to improve the safety and quality of family day care in the city. As it is currently organized, the program consists of eight training workshops, home visits and a validation. A total of 155 providers have become accredited during the past three years. During 1988, Mervyn's funded a recruitment campaign for the program which motivated the largest group to

ever become accredited in one year (67). After three years of operation a formal system of training had evolved with a formal curriculum based on the Family Day Care Education Series (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1985) and other resources. Although, this training system was producing noticeable improvements in quality among the providers it was time to conduct a careful program evaluation to answer two questions. To what extent is the training program able to improve the quality of care which participants provide for children? Are there any weak spots in the workshops which could be improved?

THE STUDY

The Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) is used twice during the training and accreditation program. The home visitor uses the FDCRS to rate and give feedback to each provider toward the beginning of their participation in the program (pretest) and at the completion of training a validator administers it again (posttest). Validators are outside early childhood professionals who receive training and a small per diem to conduct the observation. To answer the two above questions an item analysis of the 1988 validations was conducted. Pretest ratings for 62 providers were compared with posttest ratings to determine gains. the interval between pretest and posttest ratings averaged 3.5 months. All providers in the sample were registered by the state, had completed the eight required workshops, had received at least one home visit with a recorded pretest and were validated.

The FDCRS is composed of 36 items over six categories; space and furnishings, basic care, language and reasoning, learning activities, social development, and adult needs. Each item is rated on a Likert scale from

1-7. Descriptions of the ratings are 1) inadequate - not meeting basic custodial needs, 3) minimal- meets custodial needs and to some extent basic developmental needs, 5) good- meets developmental needs and 7) excellent- high quality personalized care. Intermediate ratings of 2, 4, and 6 are given when the provider has met all of the requirements for the lower rating and part of the requirements of the higher score. Validators as well as home visitors were trained on use of the FDCRS using techniques designed by the scale's authors. This included classroom instruction, sample items and actual use of the scale in small groups (2-3) with a trainer. Inter-rater reliability was established at no lower than 85% agreement. This study compared ratings on 35 of the items. The item for special needs children was omitted since it had been used to rate only two providers.

Two levels of information were examined as part of the item analysis; 1)the mean posttest scores and mean gains for 35 items of the FDCRS were compared and 2)subscales were constructed by grouping items according to the content of seven of the workshops, and comparing mean subscale posttest and mean gains for these subscales. The workshop topics for which subscales were constructed were Space to Play and Learn, Health and Safety, Growth and Development, Planning an Activity Program, Handling Behavior Problems, Working with Parents, and Business Management. Content of the eighth workshop, Child Abuse Prevention, is not adequately covered by the FDCRS so evaluation was not possible. The significance level of gains was evaluated by conducting t-tests for non independent samples.

RESULTS

Mean gains for the individual items were all determined to be at a significance level of .001 since t-tests resulted in critical values of t>

3.551. (See Table I.) A rank ordering of the mean posttest scores for individual items showed a range from 5.81 for tone to 4.11 for cultural awareness. Twenty-nine items had mean posttest scores at 5.00 or above. When mean gains were ranked the range was from a 2.87 improvement for preschool space to be alone to 1.79 for indoor space arrangement with twenty-nine items improving by 2.00 or more on the FDCRS. Two items which ranked high for both posttest and gains were relationships with parents and arrival and leaving. Relationships with parents had a mean posttest score of 5.60 (rank=2) and showed a mean gain of 2.52 (rank=7). Arriving and leaving had a mean posttest score of 5.47 (rank=6) and a mean gain of 2.33 (rank=12). Items which showed the lowest amount of improvement as well as received lowest mean posttest scores were; use of TV, health, reasoning and concepts, art, and blocks.

For the purposes of this study subscales were constructed by assigning thirty-five items to subscales based on training content of workshops. Mean gains for these constructed subscales all achieved a significance level of .001 using t-tests for non independent samples. Results of ranking the providers' mean posttest scores on the FDCRS were; 1) Handling Behavior Problems (5.56), 2) Working with Parents (5.53), 3) Business Management (5.50), 4) Space to Play and Learn (5.20), 5) Health and Safety (5.13), 6) Growth and Development (5.04), and 7) Planning an Activity Program (5.00). All constructed subscale scores were at or above the 5 level, which is defined on the FDCRS as "good" or care which meets the developmental needs of children. However, the real test of the effectiveness of the training program are the gains between pretest and posttest. Mean gains ranged from a high of 2.45 for Working with Parents to a low of 2.21 for Business Management. The only comparison of differences between mean subscale gains

which resulted in an acceptable level of significance (alpha=.05) was the comparison between the constructed subscales with highest and lowest mean gains, Working with Parents and Business Management. (See Table II.)

DISCUSSION

Significant gains were made on all individual items of the FDCRS with 83% (29) of item mean scores increasing by two or more points. Also, twenty-nine of 35 mean posttest scores for individual items were at the 5.0 or better level. These results support the common sense belief that training family day care providers leads to improvements in quality of care. Interestingly, the item for cultural awareness received the lowest ranking for mean posttest score (4.11) but, showed a high mean gain (2.44). Although mean gains on the seven constructed subscales indicated positive results from each workshop comparisons between the constructed subscales showed little difference between workshop topics. The study examined the effects of a training program composed of three elements; workshops, home visits, and validations. Results showed clearly that the training system works. It would be reasonable to assume that each of the training components contributed in some way to the overall improvement found; however, additional research would be necessary to explain the relative importance of each factor. Gains and posttest scores were low on two items (art and blocks) indicating the need to strengthen the Planning an Activity Program workshop. One change undertaken since completion of the study was the addition of one accredited provider as the trainer for this workshop and another as a validator. Participants have expressed appreciation of the opportunity to learn from a more experienced peer. It is hoped that these changes will help unite the "old" providers with the "new" in the operation of their training and accreditation program.

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TABLE I
FDCRS- POSTTEST MEANS AND MEAN GAINS RANKED

RANK	ITEM NAME	POSTTEST	ITEM NAME	MEAN GAIN
1	Tone	5.81	Space/alone:2 yr ^	2.87
2	Relationship with Parents*	5.60	Sand & Water	2.82
3	Inform. lang: I & T	5.60	Schedule, daily activities	2.82
4	Supervision of play	5.50	Child related display	2.66
5	Professional Growth	5.50	Personal grooming	2.54
6	Arriving & Leaving*	5.47	Meals & snacks	2.53
7	Discipline	5.47	Relationship with parents*	2.52
8	Nap/rest	5.47	Cultural awareness***	2.44
9	Furnishings; relax	5.44	Space alone: I & T	2.41
10	Inform. lang: 2 yr ^	5.44	Language/underst: I & T	2.38
11	Balancing Pers./Care. Resp	5.44	Dramatic Play***	2.35
12	Furnishings; lrn/care	5.34	Arriving & Leaving*	2.33
27	Use of TV	5.03	Reasoning (concepts)	2.13
28	Health	5.02	Inform. lang: I & T	2.08
29	Space/alone: 2 yr ^	5.00	Furnishings: lrn/care	2.05
30	Reasoning(concepts)	4.89	Furnishings: relaxation	1.98
31	Art**	4.83	Balancing Pers./Care. Resp	1.92
32	Safety	4.81	Blocks**	1.85
33	Blocks**	4.77	Art**	1.83
34	Dramatic Play***	4.77	Use of TV	1.79
35	Cultural Awareness***	4.11	Indoor space arr.	1.79

* Posttest and Gain both high ** Posttest and Gain both low
*** Posttest low, Gain high

TABLE II
CONSTRUCTED SUB-SCALE MEAN GAINS

SUBSCALE RANKS:		SUBSCALE NAME	PRETEST MEAN	POSTTEST MEAN	MEAN GAIN	t-VAL*
POST-TEST	GAIN					
4	3	Space to Play and Learn (items 1,2,3,4,5,6a,6b)	2.90	5.20	2.29	15.27
5	2	Health and Safety (items 8,9,10,11,13)	2.80	5.13	2.33	17.92
6	4.5	Growth and Development (items 14a&b, 15a&b, 16,17,29)	2.80	5.04	2.24	18.67
7	6	Planning an Activity Program (items 18 - 25)	2.78	5.00	2.22	15.86
1	4.5	Handling Behavior Problems (items 7,26,27,28)	3.32	5.56	2.24	18.67
2	1	Working with Parents ** (items 7,31)	3.08	5.53	2.45	16.33
3	7	Business Management ** (items 31,32,33)	3.29	5.50	2.21	17.00

* all significance levels for subscale gains = .001
** significance of difference in gains = .05 (no other comparisons at an acceptable level of significance)